

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-06 CIAE-00 L-01 INR-05
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PM-03 SP-02 EUR-08 ACDA-10
OMB-01 /063 W
-----080592 280336Z /70

R 280148Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3749
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 12238

LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD AND COMIPAC

EO 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PEPR PBOR PINS ECON VM CB CH US UR
SUBJECT: UN OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON SRV

SUMMARY: A UN OFFICIAL WHO JUST LEFT THE SRV FOUND HANOI
OBSESSED WITH THE CAMBODIAN CONFLICT AND UNCERTAIN ON HOW TO
RESOLVE ITS PROBLEMS WITH PHNOM PENH. HE DETECTED CONSIDERABLE
CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE REACTION FROM PEKING TO VIETNAMESE MOVES
AND BELIEVES THAT THE SOVIETS ARE ENCOURAGING MORE AGGRESSIVE
VIETNAMESE ACTION AGAINST THE REGIME IN PHNOM PENH. CONSOLIDA-
TION OF CONTROL OF SOUTH VIETNAM IS HANOI'S MAJOR DOMESTIC
PROBLEM. THE MOVE AGAINST CAPITALIST TRADERS IS SEEN AS RESPONDING
TO ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CONCERNS. END SUMMARY.

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1. AN UNUSUALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE UN OFFICIAL GAVE US THE FOLLOWING
ASSESSMENT APRIL 25 OF DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING VIETNAM.
HE LEFT HANOI THIS WEEK. VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS ARE OBSESSED,
HE SAID, WITH THE CONFLICT WITH CAMBODIA. THEY WERE SURPRISED
AT THE TOUGHNESS OF CAMBODIAN RESISTANCE WHEN VIETNAMESE TROOPS
INVADED CAMBODIA IN DECEMBER AND EVEN MORE SURPRISED WHEN CAMBODIANS
FORCES FOLLOWED VIETNAMESE TROOPS BACK INTO VIETNAM SINCE JANUARY.

HANOI NOW REALIZES THAT IT HAS INVOLVED ITSELF IN A POTENTIALLY LONG AND INTRACTABLE CONFLICT AND IS IN AN OBVIOUS QUANDARY AS TO HOW TO PROCEED. THE UN OFFICIAL EXPRESSED SERIOUS DOUBT THAT HANOI WOULD EXERCISE A MILITARY OPTION, PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE CHINESE REACTION. HE DOES NOT QUESTION THE INITIAL SINCERITY OF HANOI IN PRESENTING ITS THREE POINT NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT PROPOSAL, BUT BELIEVES FURTHER POISONING OF CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS SINCE THE PROPOSAL WAS MADE FEBRUARY 5 HAS LED HANOI TO CHANGE ITS STRATEGY AND SEEK REPLACEMENT OF THE POL POT REGIME. SUBVERSION SEEMS TO BE COURSE HANOI HAS NOW CHOSEN.

2. THE UN OFFICIAL SAID THAT ALTHOUGH OFFICIALS IN HANOI SHY FROM DISCUSSION OF RELATIONS WITH THE PRC, THE INCREASING TENSION IN THOSE RELATIONS IS CLEAR, AS IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP TO HANOI. THE MERE EXISTENCE OF THE PRC INFLUENCES HANOI, ACCORDING TO THE UN OFFICIAL. CHINA HAS TO DO ALMOST NOTHING TO EXERT PRESSURE ON HANOI. IN FACT, OF COURSE, PEKING HAS OBVIOUSLY ARMED CAMBODIA AND MAINTAINS TROOPS NEAR THE SINO-VIETNAMESE BORDER. INCIDENTS ON THE SINO-VIET BORDER (WHICH THE UN OFFICIAL DOUBTS HAVE OCCURRED RECENTLY) AND RESTRICTIONS ON TRANSPORT OF PETROLEUM AND GRAIN FROM CHINA TO VIETNAM WOULD BE OTHER FORMS OF PRESSURE PEKING COULD EXERT. THUS FAR, HOWEVER, PEKING HAS NOT YET NEEDED TO PRESSURE HANOI SO OVERTLY. THE SIGNALS HAVE, NEVERTHELESS, BEEN SENT AND RECEIVED.

3. AS OTHER RECENT VISITORS TO HANOI, THE UN OFFICIAL RECEIVED
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THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS ARE URGING THE VIETNAMESE TO ACT MORE AGGRESSIVELY TOWARD THE PHNOM PENH REGIME. ASKED IF HE THOUGHT THE VIETNAMESE WERE MOVING CLOSER TO MOSCOW, THE UN OFFICIAL COMMENTED, "ONLY IN A RELATIVE SENSE." AS RELATIONS WITH THE PRC BECOME STRAINED AND CHINA PROVIDES FEWER OF HANOI'S NEEDS, MOSCOW BECOMES RELATIVELY MORE IMPORTANT. TO THE UN OFFICIAL, HOWEVER, THE VIETNAMESE STILL HOPE AND COUNT ON NORMALIZATION WITH THE U S TO COUNTERBALANCE RELATIONS WITH BOTH COMMUNIST GIANTS. FOR THE MOMENT THE FRENCH, SWEDES, JAPANESE AND OTHER EUROPEANS ARE HELPING TO FILL THE GAP, BUT HANOI REALIZES THAT ONLY THE U S CAN PROVIDE THE ASSISTANCE AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE GENUINELY TO COUNTERBALANCE MOSCOW AND PEKING. ON RELATIONS WITH OTHER POWERS, THE OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE SWEDES ARE ATTEMPTING TO SERVE AS THE "EUROPEAN CONSCIENCE" IN HANOI, BUT THEIR PRO-VIETNAMESE BIAS UNDERMINES THIS ROLE. RELATIONS BETWEEN HANOI AND BONN HAVE NOT DEVELOPED WELL, POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF PERSONALITIES INVOLVED. THIS HAS DISAPPOINTED HANOI.

4. THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM FOR HANOI IS CONSOLIDATION OF ITS CONTROL OVER THE SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM. AS OTHER VISITORS HAVE REPORTED, NORTHERN CADRES SENT SOUTH ARE SOON CORRUPTED. MOREOVER, THEY ARE VILIFIED BY RELATIVES IN

THE SOUTH WHO CONSTANTLY ACCUSE THE NORTHERNERS OF BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PLIGHT OF SOUTH VIETNAM. ONCE PROSPEROUS SOUTH VIETNAM IS BEING DRAGGED TO THE MUCH LOWER LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH.

5. THE UN OFFICIAL BELIEVES THAT THE "ABOLITION OF CAPITALIST TRADERS" WAS DIRECTED AT THE CHINESE AND PRECIPITATED BY THE DIFFICULTIES WITH CAMBODIA. THE OFFICIAL BELIEVES THAT HANOI IS INCREASINGLY FEARFUL OF PEKING'S INFLUENCE IN CHOLON AND AMONG THE CHINESE GENERALLY IN VIETNAM. ECONOMIC LOSSES ON THE CAMBODIAN BORDER IN THE NEW ECONOMIC ZONES, DEMORALIZATION OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE, AND THE LOOSENING OF AUTHORITY BECAUSE OF SOUTHERN DISAFFECTION AND THE BORDER WAR LED HANOI TO MOVE AGAINST THE CHINESE

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COMMUNITY, WHICH WAS SEEN AS AN ECONOMIC AND A POSSIBLE SECURITY THREAT. THE ECONOMIC RESULTS WILL, OF COURSE, BE MIXED, SINCE THE MOVE CUTS SEVERAL WAYS, BUT IT SEEMS UNLIKELY TO RESOLVE QUICKLY THE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES IN THE SOUTH. IN FACT, THE CONTRARY MAY BE TRUE. THE MOVE MAY CONTRIBUTE TO A WORSENING OF THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY AT LEAST IN THE SHORT-TERM.

6. THE OFFICIAL SAID THAT HE LEARNED THAT HANOI HAS FINALLY
SUCCUMBED TO PRESSURE FROM PEKING AND MOSCOW AND AGREED TO ALLOW
BOTH TO OPEN CONSULATES IN HT CHI MINH CITY. HOWEVER, THE
AGREEMENT IS IN PRINCIPLE ONLY . HANOI HAS TOLD MOSCOW AND PEKING
THAT THE TIMING IS NOT RPT NOT RIGHT AND THAT THEY MUST WAIT
UNTIL IT IS. A LONG DELAY SEEMS LIKELY, THE OFFICIAL COMMENTED.
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A SIZEABLE DEMONSTRATION TOOK PLACE IN CHOLON AGAINST THE
"RESOLUTION TO ABOLISH CAPITALIST TRADERS," FEATURING, TO THE
HORROR OF HANOI, PLACARDS EXTOLLING MAO TSE-TUNG. THIS EVENT
HEIGHTENED HANOI'S CONCERNS ABOUT PEKING'S INFLUENCE IN SOUTH
VIETNAM. (THERE ARE EVEN RUMORS THAT PEKING IS BEHIND INSURGENT
ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM, WE HEARD LAST WEEK FROM A WESTERN

DIPLOMAT FROM HANOI.)

7. ON A FINAL NOTE, THE UN OFFICIAL EXPRESSED ANXIETY THAT THE
TIMING OF THE CONDEMNATION OF THE REGIME IN PHNOM PENH FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS' VIOLATIONS BY PRESIDENT CARTER COULD MISLEAD HANOI
INTO BELIEVING THAT THE U S AND OTHERS WHO MAY TAKE UP THE
PRESIDENT'S CALL, WOULD NOT RPT NOT OBJECT IF HANOI MOVED
AGAINST THE REGIME IN PHNOM PENH. THE OFFICIAL NOTED THAT
INTERNATIONAL OPINION, ESPECIALLY AMERICAN OPINION, IS TERRIBLY
IMPORTANT TO HANOI.

8. COMMENT: WITH ONLY SLIGHT DIFFERENCES IN EMPHASIS, THE UN
OFFICIAL'S OBSERVATIONS, BASED PRIMARILY ON TALKS WITH THE VIET-
NAMESE, ARE REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO THE OBSERVATIONS OF THE
WESTERN JOURNALIST REPORTED IN BANGKOK 11555 . WE ALSO HAD THE
OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH A WESTERN DIPLOMAT IN TOWN FROM
HANOI LAST WEEKEND. HIS VIEWS ON MOST OF THESE SUBJECTS WERE
ALSO VERY SIMILAR.
WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO12238
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780181-0590
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978047/aaaaafhe.tel
Line Count: 209
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7ba861b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3006879
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UN OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON SRV SUMMARY: A UN OFFICIAL WHO JUST LEFT THE SRV FOUND HANOI OBSESSED WITH THE CAMBODIAN CONFLICT AND UNCERTAIN
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, PINS, ECON, VM, CB, CH, US, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7ba861b2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014